

Irving, Liberals, and the working people

Ethical lapses by Liberals becoming all too common

by Ben Isitt

Reports confirming that federal Liberal cabinet ministers received favours from the Irving empire have surfaced, as \$55 million in public funds makes its way to New Brunswick's richest family.

Minister of Labour Claudette Bradshaw hitched a free ride in an Irving corporate jet, along with Industry Minister Allan Rock and others, to the family's exclusive fishing lodge in the summer of 2001. Conservative MP and former Saint John mayor Elsie Wayne has also flown for free in an Irving plane. Too bad the fruits of the Irving gravy train are not distributed more equally.

This should be no surprise to thinking people. Rather, it confirms what we have long suspected: that an economic and political oligarchy rules this province and country. Through an intricate web of personal favours, media concentration, and class

interest, the wealthiest Canadians control the levers of government, ensuring public policies defend, rather than redistribute, power and privilege.

This fact is starkly demonstrated by a \$55 million federal grant to Irving to shutdown the Saint John shipyard. The logic evades me. Public dollars are being handed over to the richest family in New Brunswick, to eliminate an economic enterprise as well as the jobs and opportunity it affords? Paul Martin has already confirmed that this deal will go through once he assumes power next year. The motto appears to be "Screw the workers of Canada."

If the Chretien gang demonstrated frequent ethical lapses, the Martin government will only get worse. Our next political leader is the former owner of one of the largest shipping companies in the country - Canada Steamship Lines. Under political pressure, Martin handed the company over to his three sons last August. In a compelling display of patriotism, Paul Martin sailed his ships - including the Rt. Hon. Paul Martin

- under the foreign flags of countries such as Liberia, Cyprus and the Bahamas, to avoid paying pesky taxes to the Canadian government. To some this would be considered high treason. To others, astute business practices.

As Finance Minister in the 1990s, Paul Martin delivered over \$60 billion dollars in tax cuts, the majority to corporations such as Irving. In the same period, transfer payments to universities and hospitals were slashed, leading to a doubling in tuition barriers and the privatization of healthcare jobs and services. Public funds were transferred from working people to corporations and the wealthiest Canadians.

Our political and economic system would be a tragedy, if it weren't such a glaring farce.

Political participation is sorely lacking in this country. Many Canadians are still blinded by corporate media lies, from Irving mouthpieces such as *The Daily Gleaner* and the *Telegraph-Journal*. Those who have learned to think critically too often retreat into the



Paul Martin sailed his company ships under foreign flags to avoid paying Canadian taxes.

paralyzing corners of cynicism and defeat.

Political participation is no longer an option. It is a moral imperative for everyone who believes that poverty and unemployment have no place in a country such as Canada,

vested with trillions of dollars in resource wealth and human capital.

It is time for the students and faculty at UNB to descend from their ivory tower and join the larger community in the streets and in the parliaments of this country. The rule

of Irving, Martin and their gang must be brought to an end. We must spread the idea that a more just social order is both possible and necessary.

Ben Isitt is a member of the Fredericton NDP Club and a doctoral student with the Department of History.

Pulling out of Iraq would be condemning Iraqis to further suffering

Looking at the roots of Al Qaeda's terrorism

by David Shipley

I've often heard it said that it is important to remember the past so that one doesn't repeat mistakes. I'm a firm believer in this concept. I only hope the US Administration realizes this lesson and applies it to the war on terror soon.

In order to properly understand the importance of the US role in Iraq and the need to stay the course, we have to look back to the beginning phases of the war on terror. This means going back not to Al Qaeda's horrible attacks on September 11th, 2001, but in fact to 10 years ago. This is critical because it was 10 years ago this month Al-Qaeda began its campaign against the United States and the western world.

The battleground was not in the Middle East, but instead in the horn of Africa, in a country that would be made famous for a massive humanitarian crisis caused by the collapse of its government and the rise of fanatical warlords.

That country was Somalia and Al-Qaeda began its campaign against the United States in the war-ravaged city of Mogadishu.

What is known today is that local warlord Mohamed Farad Aided was aided both organizationally and ideologically by Al-Qaeda. According to US charges against Muhammad Atef, the Al Qaeda operations chief travelled to Somalia in 1992 and 1993 to train local fighters and to plan operations against the U.S. forces stationed there. In addition to Atef, Ayman al-Zawahiri, one of Bin Ladin's most trusted officials, is also believed to have helped organized guerrilla

tactics against the Americans.

In a 1998 interview published in *Esquire* (available online at www.esquire.com/features/articles/2001/010913_mfe_binladen_1.html) bin Ladin taunted the US as a paper tiger. In the interview he describes how after defeating the Russians in Afghanistan, Muslim fighters were no longer intimidated by the superpower concept. They came to see Somalia as the opportunity to punish the US in the same way in which they had punished the USSR in Afghanistan.

The tactics employed against the Americans were designed to weaken morale of the troops, but more importantly, to weaken the political will of the United States. The ambush of a joint US Army Ranger and US Special Forces Delta team, depicted in the recent blockbuster *Black Hawk Down*, portrays Al-

Qaeda's and Aided's most successful operation. During the ambush 18 Rangers and Delta Force personnel were killed and over 84 more were injured. The attack shook the morale of the US troops who were trying to help the beleaguered people of Mogadishu. The subsequent CNN coverage of the body of a US soldier being dragged through the streets of the city behind a truck broke the political will of the Clinton administration.

In 1993 Al-Qaeda learned what it thought was a valuable lesson about the American psyche: the US likes to talk the talk, but once the body bags start heading home they quickly lose their will to fight.

It was an idea not without precedent. This lesson had been previously demonstrated in 1983 when the Reagan administration pulled its forces out of the peacekeeping operations in Lebanon after Shiite extremists blew up the Marine barracks, killing 241

American and 56 French soldiers.

Cut back to 2003 and the new battleground is post-Saddam Iraq. Like Lebanon 20 years before and Mogadishu 10 years ago, Baghdad has become the magnet for Jihad Inc.

In this new conflict the US must not make the same mistakes it has in the past. Pulling out of Iraq before the establishment of a stable democracy is recipe for disaster far worse than the threat posed by Saddam and his regime. The power vacuum that a withdrawal would create would foster a dangerous environment in which Iraq would devolve in a Middle Eastern version of the Balkans, with factional fighting and ethnic divisions leading to widespread bloodshed and suffering.

This cannot be allowed to happen. Whether one supported the war in Iraq or not at this point is irrelevant. The war happened. Collectively, the consequences of this war now have to be dealt with, and pulling out the US soldiers from Iraq is not a rational or a reasonable option. Those who advocate doing so are not friends of the suffering people of Iraq, they are their enemy. Anyone who advocates an immediate, or even a short term pull out of US troops before Iraq has a chance to be successful and stable is condemning these people to further suffering.

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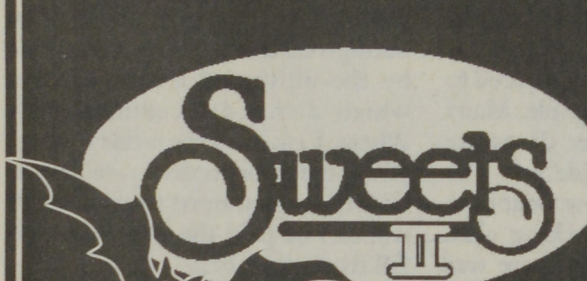
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